

My thanks to you, my reader. I hope you found the story rewarding and enjoyable, to the degree anyone can “enjoy” a novel in a war setting. If so, please give the novel a “star” rating where you purchased it. A few kind words in a review also help other readers choose this novel. Independently published novels depend on this sort of feedback.

I offer my thanks to the many people who helped me craft this novel. My first reader, Susan Piechowski, MD, tolerated my long hours of research (including two WWI battlefield tours), writing, and revision of this and my other novels. She reviewed and proofread each revision. Thank you, Sue.

My critique group, Wordpardners, played an outsized role in helping me craft this story. They include Marilee Aufdenkamp, Rex Griffin, Scott Hibbard, Margaret Rodenberg, and Mike Torreano.

Thanks to my “beta” readers including Henry “Buz” Page, Paul Zimmerman, Gloria Zimmerman, Richard Anderson, Joe Kullman, Spencer Millimen, Patti Draude, Ray Rigel, Tom Mack, DDS, Chuck de Maille, Rob Fraser, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Andrews, USMC, and Staff Sergeant Michael Andrews, USMC (Ret.). I hope anyone I left out will forgive me.

Jenny Quinlan from Historical Editorial provided great advice with a developmental edit, a copyedit, as well as feedback and encouragement over the years. Her colleague, Aaron Redfern, did the final copyedits. I thank them for correcting my always-deficient grammar and recommend them without reservation.

Generative artificial intelligence played no role in the creation of this novel. The early versions of this novel were written before generative AI was commercially available. The manuscript was written using Microsoft Word for Mac. Later versions of this software may have had an AI interface, but the only features used in this novel were spell- and grammar-check. Every keystroke was made by the author.

More Visual did the excellent cover art. I took the back cover photo near Les Mares Farm.

This novel could not have been written without heavy reliance on historical source material, and the advice of several experts on the history of the Battle of Belleau Wood. I was fortunate to be able to correspond with the late George B. Clark. He was a remarkable historian and prolific author whose books and monographs formed the foundation of my understanding of the battle. He reviewed the third revision of this novel for historical accuracy. My work with him focused on the military aspects of the battle.

I made the map at the front of the novel and those at the beginning of Chapters 12, 18, 27, 28, 32, and 44. The maps at the beginning of Chapters 22, 34, 45, 46, 54, and 61 include overlays I created and superimposed on a base map used with permission from the late George Clark in his monograph *The History of the Third Battalion 5th Marines, 1917-1918*. Pike, NH: The Brass Hat, 1996. This appears to be an open-source military map. The map at the start of Chapter 39 was used with Clark’s permission from page 101 of *The United States Army Second Division Northwest of Chateau Thierry in World War by John W. Thomason, Jr.* McFarland, 2006, edited

by Mr. Clark. The maps at the start of Chapters 20 and 25 are my modifications of maps used with Mr. Clark's permission from his *Devil Dogs: Fighting Marines of World War I*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1999, page 75. The maps at the start of Chapters 51 and 62 are from the same source, pages 163 and 195 respectively, in their original form.

Colonel William Anderson, USMC (Ret.) and Colonel William White, USMC (Ret.) reviewed full manuscripts of early revisions for historical accuracy. Colonel Anderson also provided a sounding board for some of the medical history and many other details. Thank you, Bill! I corresponded with Lieutenant Colonel Peter F. Owen, USMC (Ret.) about the accuracy and plausibility of my fictional account of the gas attack on the 96th Company in Chapter 54. André Sobocinski, the historian with the US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, provided thoughts as well as many documents and photos from Navy BUMED archives. These helped in my accounts of the US Navy medical men in this novel and the biographies on my website.

I took two WWI battlefield tours with Military Historical Tours, the first led by Colonel William White and Lieutenant Colonel Gary Andrejak, USAF (Ret.), and the second led by James White and historian, Staff Sergeant Steven Girard, USA (Ret.). Historian Gilles Lugin led our tours of Belleau Wood and provided a great depth of understanding about the battle and the people who fought it. The opportunity to have my boots on the ground with these historians was critical to an understanding of the terrain.